


Transcript

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Cambodia and Laos

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NARRATOR: Phnompenh, June 1979, six months after Communist Vietnam had invaded Communist Cambodia, ousting its rulers, the Khmer Rouge.

Phnompenh, four years after the Communist Khmer Rouge had defeated an American-backed government: four years of terror that followed five years of war.

On the day of victory, the Khmer Rouge began to empty all of Cambodia's cities and towns at gunpoint. They went on to starve or slaughter hundreds of thousands, perhaps two million Cambodians -- nobody knows.

The Geneva Conference of 1954 had guaranteed the neutrality of Cambodia and Laos. But neither country could prevent the war in neighboring Vietnam from spilling across its borders. The neutralist government in Laos included members of the pro-Communist Pathet Lao. The Pathet Lao were supported by the North Vietnamese who moved supplies through eastern Laos to the Vietcong fighting in South Vietnam. The United States backed the anti-Communist forces in Laos.

JFK PRESS CONFERENCE, March 1981: *Here now is the Chief Executive.*

PRESIDENT JOHN F. KENNEDY: My fellow Americans, Laos is far away from America. But the world is small. Its two million people live in a country three times the size of Austria. The security of all Southeast Asia will be endangered if Laos loses its neutral independence. Its own safety runs with the safety of us all. In real neutrality, observed by all. All we want in Laos is peace, not war.

NARRATOR: To back up Kennedy's words of support for Laos, his administration secretly organized the largest of the hill tribes, the Meo or Hmong.

EARL YOUNG (Air America): Now most people don't know that in '61 and '62, there were teams of U.S. special forces in the mountains of Laos -- and it's a very rugged country -- who were training and equipping and leading the Meo guerrilla forces against the Pathet Lao.

NARRATOR: Later, the CIA took charge, often using its airline, Air America, as cover.

VINT LAWRENCE (CIA): I was working for an airline the whole time I was there basically. That was my cover -- thin though it was. Everybody knew exactly what I was doing. But then no one ever saw me so it didn't really make a whole lot of difference. But that if I were killed, my identification was as an airline employee.

NARRATOR: Like the Soviet Union, America supplied its allies -- in the case of the Hmong, covertly.

EARL YOUNG: Now it obviously wouldn't have done to publicize in *The Washington Post*, for example, we had just lost three aircraft in Laos because of enemy groundfire, because we weren't supposed to be there in the first place. So the general subterfuge was that any incident was called "aircraft malfunctioning" or "inclement weather." And so the families of survivors of these people at home would simply be told that unfortunately your husband or your son was killed in a crash in the mountains of Laos.

NARRATOR: In 1961, Laos was the major Southeast Asia crisis. But nobody wanted to fight, least of all the big powers. At an international conference in 1962, they patched together another neutralist government giving the pro-Communist Pathet Lao more prominence. But despite early optimism, Laos was still divided, and as the war in neighboring Vietnam escalated, the fragile coalition fell apart.

In March 1964, five months before the first American bombing raid on North Vietnam, the United States organized a secret bombing campaign in Laos. Using unmarked planes, they mainly attacked the Ho Chi Minh Trail, the increasingly important Communist supply route from North to South Vietnam. The air war intensified, hitting Laotian villages and driving a million peasants from their homes. For eight years, Laos was the most

bombed country in the world.

The Pathet Lao forces grew. Equipped with heavier weapons by the North Vietnamese, their guerrillas began to fight in battalion-sized units against their principal enemy, the Hmong.

VINT LAWRENCE: When the whole context of the war in Southeast Asia changed, and it became expedient, perhaps, for the Americans to push the Hmong into something other than their traditional way of fighting, this is the place where we sold them down the river.

NARRATOR: The United States spent hundreds of millions of dollars on the war. The Hmong army, suffering heavy casualties, recruited children.

HMONG BOY/SOLDIER INTERVIEW: *Q: What sort of gun is that he's carrying?*

A: M- 16. He says can do two things: automatic and semi-automatic.

Q: How old is he?

A: Ten years old.

NARRATOR: In Vientiane, the Laotian capital, the mountain war seemed far away.

There were no American combat soldiers in Laos -- only officials, aid workers, military advisers and CIA agents. No troops. Yet American spending was ten times bigger than the Laotian national budget.

WILLIAM COLBY (head of Phoenix Program): We provided the logistics, the air support, transport, the communications, ammunition weaponry and so forth, while the North Vietnamese forces grew from seven to 70,000. These tribal forces up in the country that were supported by CIA -- not the Royal Lao army, which stayed right down in the comfortable valley and almost never heard a shot fired in anger. But the forces supported by CIA held that increase force off for about ten years. Now I think that's a pretty good record.

NARRATOR: Ammunition was plentiful, but the Hmong were running out of soldiers. The United States covertly imported and paid for 8,000 Thais to fight in Laos.

In early 1973, cease-fire agreements were reached in Vietnam and Laos. Two years later, the Communist Pathet Lao took over.

Ten years after the 1954 Geneva agreements, neighboring Cambodia was still at peace. Cambodia's ancient grandeur was carved in the stones of Angkor, once the center of an empire that stretched across Southeast Asia.

Hindu God-Kings had ruled a powerful state constantly at war with its neighbors. In the fifteenth century, the empire collapsed. Angkor was overrun and abandoned for more than 400 years.

In 1960, the last king of Cambodia was cremated.

His son, Prince Norodom Sihanouk. Sihanouk had been put on the throne by colonial France. After independence, he abdicated in favor of his father, in order to play a more direct political role. Sihanouk remained chief of state, and skillfully maneuvered to preserve his nation's neutrality.

Cambodian folk dancers celebrated the country's abundance of rice and fish.

Nearly 90 percent of all peasants owned their land. Cambodia prospered. Unlike Vietnam and Laos, it was at peace.

To Cambodia's peasants, Sihanouk was almost divine. Many believed that he was even responsible for the success of their crops. Sihanouk relied on them, rather than on the urban population, for support. But Sihanouk's prestige and popularity could not change Cambodia's geography.

In 1963, Sihanouk organized denunciations of America's growing involvement in Vietnam. He feared that the war would spread across his borders as South Vietnamese troops pursued the Vietcong into Cambodia. He was willing to befriend any country or leader that he thought might assure Cambodia's survival. He formed a close relationship with China's Mao Zedong. He also courted leaders of non-aligned nations like Indonesia's President Sukarno. He strengthened his ties with France's President Charles de Gaulle. He also wrote, directed and starred in his own

feature films -- all of them glorifying Cambodia.

In 1966, Cambodia continued its carefree festivities despite growing dangers within the country and along its borders.

Sihanouk had broken relations with America. His officers were becoming restless. They no longer received American military aid.

Sihanouk was also beginning to face trouble in the countryside, where small groups of Cambodia Communists, the Khmer Rouge, were recruiting some discontented peasants.

Sihanouk continued to juggle. In 1967, he invited Jacqueline Kennedy to Cambodia, hoping to draw America's attention to his dilemma. Sihanouk was concerned by the Vietnamese Communist buildup in the sanctuaries, and he feared a large-scale U.S. attack across his borders. As a counterbalance to this visit he denounced America's Vietnam policy.

NORODOM SIHANOUK, November 1967: *It would be immoral to support, you know, your aggression, the aggression of the United States against the people of Vietnam. We want to have the right to continue to have the right to be united, to be free, and how could we deny to Vietnam the right to self-determination?*

NARRATOR: Pursuing their enemy, American and South Vietnamese aircraft often attacked across the Cambodian border. Sihanouk criticized Secretary of State Dean Rusk, who was then trying to repair relations.

PRESS CONFERENCE, November 1967: *SIHANOUK: There is a contradiction between the declaration of friendship and respect from Mr. Dean Rusk on one hand and on the other hand your forces in South Vietnam continue to come into Cambodia and to kill..*

INTERVIEWER: ...what is necessary...

SIHANOUK: ...our peasants and innocent peasants, innocent civilian servants.

NARRATOR: In 1969, newly elected President Nixon launched secret B-52 bombing raids over Cambodia against North Vietnamese and Vietcong sanctuaries driving them further into the country. Nixon neither informed Sihanouk, nor sought his approval for this escalation.

HENRY KISSINGER (National Security Adviser): We had many indirect evidences of Sihanouk's acquiescence in the bombing. Repeatedly, when he was asked at press conferences he would say that of course he did not approve attacks on Cambodia territory, but he did not know what was going on in territory occupied by what he called the Vietminh, which was the earlier name for the North Vietnamese sponsored guerrilla activity. He invited Nixon to visit Cambodia while the bombing was going on. He reestablished diplomatic relations with us.

LLOYD "MIKE" RIVES (U.S. Embassy, Cambodia): I didn't know anything about the bombing when I went to Cambodia, and in fact I didn't know anything about it until after it broke in the newspapers. For some reason I was never briefed on what was going on. I was aware of the bombing, but not necessarily in Cambodia, because in my house on the banks of the Bassac River, at night, I not only could hear the bombing, but the whole house shook from the load of bombs when they were dropped, I assumed, in Vietnam. I suppose it eventually, I mean, most of them were being dropped in Cambodia.

NARRATOR: In January 1970, Sihanouk departed for a vacation in France -- a trip that would take him on to Moscow and Peking. He wanted help to curb the Vietnamese Communist presence, which was arousing Cambodian hostility.

In March, anti-Communist officers unleashed mobs against the North Vietnamese and Vietcong embassies in Phnompenh. They demanded the expulsion of the Vietnamese Communists.

NEWSREEL, 1970: *NORODOM SIHANOUK: I can say that some officers in our army and many deputies and many members of the government in Phnompenh, they want to be your allies in order to have a bowl of your dollars. They do not take, they don't think about the destiny and the weight of our homeland. They don't mind about it. They are more patriot for dollars than for Cambodia.*

NARRATOR: A week later, Sihanouk's anti-Communist opponents ousted

him and issued orders for his execution. Sihanouk's former prime minister, General Lon Nol, led the new government, which promptly received secret American military aid.

LLOYD "MIKE" RIVES: Well after the coup, and of course Lon Nol's government gave the Vietnamese I think 48 hours to get out as I remember, there was wild enthusiasm in Phnompenh itself. All the children from the schools turned out and enlisted and got weapons and went off to the front and that kind of thing -- it was really real enthusiasm.

NARRATOR: Within three weeks, the Cambodian army gained 60,000 recruits. They were convinced that U.S. aid would quickly help them drive the Vietnamese Communists out of Cambodia.

Sihanouk, now in China, sided with the Khmer Rouge, his former opponents. He became chief of state of a government in exile.

TONG TEN: Norodom Sihanouk appealed from Peking over the radio. "Brothers and sisters," he said, "go to the jungles and join the guerrillas." Back in that period none of us even knew who the guerrillas were. I didn't know who the guerrillas were. I didn't know.

NARRATOR: In the countryside, several thousand peasants were on rampages, demanding Sihanouk's return. In the town of Kompong Cham a mob killed two members of Parliament.

FATHER FRANCOIS PONCHAUD: I saw the livers of the two politicians being carried past my church. Then a little while later, around four or five in the afternoon, the livers of the two men were skewered and grilled in the marketplace of Kompong Cham. Through examples like this, one can understand a little the brutality of the Khmers, who are a race of warriors. And that should not be forgotten.

NARRATOR: The next day, Lon Nol's troops shot and killed nearly 100 unarmed peasants. Many Cambodians still displayed Sihanouk's portrait and continued to protest in his favor.

The Lon Nol regime whipped up hatred against the Vietnamese. The victims were not the Vietnamese Communists in the border sanctuaries. The victims were Vietnamese villagers and merchants, whose families had lived in Cambodia for generations. Centuries of hatred erupted as Cambodian troops butchered Vietnamese.

Taking advantage of Lon Nol's hostility towards the Communist sanctuaries, South Vietnamese army units launched raids into Cambodia. President Nixon also decided to send U.S. ground forces into Cambodia to wipe out the sanctuaries and the elusive Communist headquarters, COSVN.

PRESIDENT RICHARD NIXON, April 30, 1970: *For the past five years, as indicated on this map that you see here, North Vietnam has occupied military sanctuaries all along the Cambodian frontier with South Vietnam.*

NARRATOR: As Nixon spoke, U.S. troops were preparing to move into Cambodia. The decision to invade, like the earlier secret decision to bomb, was withheld from the Cambodian government.

BRIG. GEN. DOUGLAS KINNARD: When we began detailed planning of this operation, it was evident to us, since we'd never operated in Cambodia, that we needed some kind of map or aerial photo, so I dispatched the G-2 down to pick these up at the headquarters in Saigon and he had great difficulty in getting them. And in a few hours he returned with the photographs and then we found out why: the photographs of course disclosed these huge craters; the B-52 bombing had been going on for some time and we weren't aware of it officially, and indeed I wasn't aware of it at all, and most of us weren't.

PRESIDENT RICHARD NIXON, April 30, 1970: *Tonight, American and South Vietnamese units will attack the headquarters for the entire Communist military operation in South Vietnam. This key control center has been occupied by the North Vietnamese and Vietcong for five years in blatant violation of Cambodia's neutrality.*

DOUGLAS KINNARD: One of the things that I found interesting was, as I looked at Nixon's speech on the incursion, after we had started it -- a few minutes after we had started it -- was the great emphasis he had

placed on the COSVN headquarters, sort of portrayed it as a kind of a Pentagon that we were going to capture. And my guess is that at best it was a foxhole and a couple of radios, but in any case, we knew that in the last 24 hours, it was well out of the area we were going to operate in, which we knew from our normal intelligence means. And so it was never really an objective, although as he portrayed it, it was a major objective to the American people.

NARRATOR: More than 20,000 American and 40,000 South Vietnamese troops invaded Cambodia. The operation, Nixon said, would protect American forces in Vietnam.

The Americans first clashed with their enemy at the Cambodian town of Snoul. Responding to rifle fire, jets and tanks pounded the town for two days. The Americans were meeting little resistance. The body count was four civilians and three Vietnamese Communist soldiers.

COL. GAIL BROOKSHIRE, June 1970: *My soldiers haven't been looting. They have strict instructions not to. We of course destroy or evacuate any war material -- anything that's obviously identifiable as war material -- or associated with the NVA. As far as civilian property is concerned, our instructions to them, and what we've been doing is just leaving it in place, hoping the civilians will come back in and recover it.*

NARRATOR: A U.S. spokesman said that the tons of captured enemy equipment had reduced the pressure on American troops in Vietnam.

DOUGLAS KINNARD: We did destroy a good number of supplies, and so I think in that very narrow sense, that the operation was probably a success. But of course one must weigh that versus what happened later in Cambodia and what the impact was politically at home, and it turns out to be a rather small part of the equation, a sort of technical...

NARRATOR: More than 350 American soldiers had died during the invasion. Within 60 days, as promised, the American forces pulled out of Cambodia. Nixon called the operation the most successful of the war. The U.S. troop withdrawals from Vietnam were speeded up.

HENRY KISSINGER: Whether Nixon and his associates, like myself, were right in ordering the incursions into Cambodia can be discussed forever. But once they had taken place, the only way out was to prevent the Khmer Rouge from taking over the country.

NARRATOR: A plan to save American lives had plunged Cambodia into full scale war. As the war widened, the North Vietnamese moved into the interior, helping the Khmer Rouge to organize and expand.

Cambodia was now a battlefield.

Financed by American money, Cambodia's army, FANK, was now the best paid in Southeast Asia. But it was inexperienced and inefficient as it sought its elusive enemy.

COLONEL JONATHAN LADD (U.S. Embassy, Cambodia): My view was that the Cambodians were certainly an amateurish army without much capability but a tremendous amount of enthusiasm.

NARRATOR: Some Cambodians had been fighting and training with the American special forces in Vietnam.

TRAINING FORCES, July 1970: *OK, stop right there...bang...bang...*

NARRATOR: They became the elite force in Lon Nol's army.

TRAINING FORCES: *...at the same time we will yell at the top of our lungs we will move...ARGH! Fear...it makes a man scared...you know, fear.*

NARRATOR: In October 1970, Lon Nol ended the centuries-old Cambodian monarchy and created the Khmer Republic. The early optimism had crumbled and the economy was in a shambles, but the army, with U.S. aid, had grown four-fold, to 100,000 men.

Lon Nol was still opposed by Prince Sihanouk, still in China.

NORODOM SIHANOUK, May 1970: *We can only fight and fight until, you now, the Americans accept to withdraw from our country. And I am optimistic, so far as the defeat of the Americans is concerned. It will be inevitable.*

NARRATOR: On January 22, 1971, the Vietnamese Communists hit Phnompenh for the first time, destroying ammunition dumps and oil supplies and wiping out the Cambodian air force. Within days, help arrived. Twenty American soldiers flew in from Vietnam, carrying guns but wearing civilian clothes.

JONATHAN LADD: They formed what they called the military equipment delivery team, M.E.D.T.C. By the time they got themselves organized, they replaced my little group of myself and four people with a general and about 113 people.

In effect, they took over most of the military activities for the FANK headquarters, which was what I hoped to preclude the Yankees running all over the place, and making decisions and providing all guidance.

NARRATOR: Only American airpower and funds kept Lon Nol's army from defeat. No Americans were dying in Cambodia, and they still were in Vietnam. For the moment, Congress went along with Nixon's war.

NIXON PRESS CONFERENCE, November 1971: *PRESIDENT RICHARD NIXON: Now let's look at Cambodia. We've made a conscious decision not to send American troops in. There are no American combat troops in Cambodia. There are no American combat advisers in Cambodia. There will be no American combat troops or advisers in Cambodia. We will aid Cambodia. Cambodia is the Nixon doctrine in its purest form. Vietnam was in violation of the Nixon doctrine because in Cambodia what we are doing is helping the Cambodians to help themselves.*

NARRATOR: The doctrine was also tested against the Ho Chi Minh Trail in southern Laos. In early 1971, South Vietnamese forces, using American equipment, moved against the Communist supply routes. The Laotian government was not informed in advance.

SISOUK NA CHAMPASSAK (Defense Minister, Laos): The prime minister said to me, "I don't know anything about this either. I only just learned about the operation from the American ambassador." I answered, "This is quite serious." He replied, "Yes, quite serious. Military operations are being conducted in our country. It is very serious but what can we do? They have taken the decision. All we can do is to lodge a protest. That is all."

NARRATOR: The United States planned the invasion and gave it air and artillery support. But without American combat troops beside them, the South Vietnamese forces fled in disarray. They took 3,000 casualties in the first week alone. In Laos, the Nixon doctrine had failed. But in Cambodia it was still intact.

As American aid poured in, corrupt Cambodian officers invented phantom soldiers. A quarter of Cambodia's army existed only as names on pay slips, endangering the lives of those who fought on in understrength units.

NARRATOR: In 1973, after three years exile in China, Sihanouk went into the Khmer Rouge zone of Cambodia.

NEWSREEL, 1973 CHINESE FILM: *NARRATOR: Norodom Sihanouk embraces Khieu Sampan, vice prime minister of the royal government of the National Union of Cambodia, and Commander-in-Chief of the People's National Liberation Armed Forces. The enemies say that Mr. Khieu Sampan has been dead for several years. But here you can see him chatting cordially with Norodom Sihanouk.*

NARRATOR: Sihanouk also embraced another Khmer Rouge leader, Pol Pot.

Sihanouk knew he was only a figurehead. The Khmer Rouge leaders planned to remold Cambodia into a rural Communist utopia and would spare no life to do it. "When they gain power," Sihanouk said, "they will spit me out like a cherry stone." They were using Sihanouk's prestige to mobilize peasant support.

CHHIT DO (Khmer Rouge organizer): The Khmer Rouge leaders said that important cadres like us were Communists. The people believed in Sihanouk, but they said that we who had joined the party should not believe in him. Starting with candidates for party membership, there was this kind of education, no one should have faith in Sihanouk. But they still allowed the people to believe in him. You see, there was public education and covert education. If we still believed in Sihanouk, they explained,

there was no point in our making revolution. Sihanouk and the revolution they told us secretly, were enemies of each other.

TONG TENG: If, at any time, the Khmer Rouge had not aligned themselves with Sihanouk, they would not have been able to carry on their fight. They wouldn't have been able to challenge Lon Nol. That's why they got Sihanouk on their side and put him up front. They made him front man because his subjects had admired and respected him for so long.

NARRATOR: In less than three years, the Khmer Rouge forces had grown from 3,000 to 60,000. The Khmer Rouge were no longer completely dependent on their Vietnamese Communist allies.

America stepped up the bombing. During six months of 1973, more than a quarter of a million tons were dropped on Cambodia.

CHHIT DO: The ordinary people were terrified by the bombing and the shelling, never having experienced war, and sometimes they shit in their pants when the big bombs and shells came. Two hundred to 400 shells would fall in each attack, and some people became shell-shocked -- just like their brains were completely shattered. Even after the shelling had stopped, they couldn't hold down a meal. Their minds just froze up and they would wander around mute, not talking for three or four days. Terrified and half-crazy, they would believe anything they were told. And because there was so much shelling, they believed whatever the Khmer Rouge told them.

TONG TENG: The fear was pervasive. Everybody was scared. But the real Reds weren't dying. They weren't being hit. The Khmer Rouge, who were doing the fighting, had dug bomb shelters. So whenever the planes came, they jumped into their holes while the people, sometimes didn't even have time to get out of their houses.

CHHIT DO: The Khmer Rouge would say that the purpose of the bombing was to completely destroy the country, not simply just to win the war, but to annihilate the population, and that it was only because we were taking cover -- moving around to avoid the bombing -- that some of us were surviving. So they used the bombing, the bomb craters and the bomb shrapnel to educate the people politically, to make the people hate and be enraged at the Americans.

HELICOPTER/BOMBING SEQUENCE, August 1973: *"OK, we'd like to go ahead and hit that same target again, it looks like it still might be lucrative, we can see some stuff down there, and if it's OK with you we'll just go ahead and put this set of air in on that target and see if we can put the next one on the first target...OK?"*

"OK...OI Hotel 4/3, the charlie, charlie 01, will you put some bomb over there, sir? And move to the number 1 target please."

NARRATOR: Despite Congressional restrictions, the U.S. embassy in Phnompenh coordinated bombing targets.

The extent of Nixon's secret bombing was not uncovered by Congress until July 1973, four years after it had started. Nixon had waged war in Cambodia without Congressional approval. It prompted angry Congressional reaction and led to the first call for Nixon's impeachment.

HENRY KISSINGER: No, the President doesn't have the right to bomb a neutral country. The question is, does the President have the right to react against concentrations of enemy troops that have already occupied neutral territory, have established themselves there for three years, and are killing, have expelled the local population and are killing Americans from that territory? All the opinions we received was that this was a clear exercise of the right of war.

ROBERT SEMANS (Secretary, U.S. Air Force): On this matter of the bombing of Cambodia, it was considered sufficiently sensitive that I was not privy to the information at the time it was going on, nor at the time that I submitted the reports to the Congress.

SENATE ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE, August 1973: **ADMIRAL THOMAS MOORER (Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff):** *I'm sure, Mr. Chairman, you will agree, and I think the American people will agree, that we should take whatever action is necessary in order to protect the lives of the American people. And that's what this operation was all about...and*

it was very effective.

SENATOR STUART SYMINGTON: *Why didn't you tell us about it and justify it? Why do we have to rely on false information? Why does the secretary of the Air Force have to come before this committee and say he "deeply regrets" and he's ashamed of the fact that he didn't give us accurate information, because he himself was misinformed?*

NARRATOR: In August 1973, a B-52 dropped its bombs on Neak Luong, the river town just 30 miles from Phnompenh. The bombing was a mistake. More than a hundred villagers were killed and several hundred were wounded. A crew member was fined \$700 for the error. The American ambassador, Emory Swank, handed the survivors \$100 each.

Congress had finally forced a bombing halt on August 15, 1973.

EMORY SWANK, August 1973: *Mes condolances personnelles et les condolances de tous les peuples Americaines.*

NARRATOR: With the end of American bombing, the tiny Cambodian air force was on its own. The Khmer Rouge had rebuilt their forces and prepared to launch their biggest offensive yet.

CHHANG SON (Minister of Information, Khmer Republic): From one-twenty in the morning of the new year, 1975 on, the Communists launched a very fierce attack from every point of the compass against Phnompenh. They used first some 80,000 troops which would increase, as the attack progressed.

NARRATOR: Many Cambodian government posts were soon to be overwhelmed. The Khmer Rouge, now close to Phnompenh, fired rockets into the city every day.

More than two million refugees had fled to Phnompenh, to escape the American bombing and Khmer Rouge brutality. They survived on meager rations provided by Western aid organizations. The city was slowly starving.

CAPTAIN PENG THUON (Khmer Republic Army (FANK)): People were running back and forth every which way, afraid to stay in the same place for long.

Sometimes the shells would fall right in the center of town, and everybody would flee to the river bank. Then the shells would fall near the river bank, and everybody would run back to the middle of town. It just went on like this, chaotically.

NARRATOR: To skirt Congressional restrictions, the U.S. military chartered civilian planes to fly in a thousand tons of rice, fuel and ammunition a day. They came under constant rocket and artillery attack. Supplies ran low.

Lon Nol's air force now strafed their enemy on the outskirts of the city. Road and rail links had already been cut. In the countryside, the Khmer Rouge decided to push for the final victory. Phnompenh was being strangled.

Rocket attacks against Phnompenh continued daily. A single rocket hitting the center of the city killed 11 people and injured more than 20 others. Government troops became desperate as the areas under their control shrank. In one town, they resorted to cannibalism to survive.

Cambodian officers used ambulances to carry ammunition until the International Red Cross stopped them. Phnompenh's hospitals were overflowing with wounded, basketball courts were covered with makeshift beds. Medicine had to be bought on the black market. Blood plasma was running out. The Cambodian army had fewer than 20 surgeons.

CAMBODIAN DOCTOR, 1975: *I feel this war is a real genocide. Khmer are killing Khmer. At the beginning of the war, of course, there were a lot of North Vietnamese in our country. But now there is only Khmer. Khmer are killing and fighting Khmer. And many, many of us, of us are dead or get casualties, or wounded. I suppose since five years of war, half million of Khmer in this country, among seven million, half million are dead or wounded.*

NARRATOR: In the once abundant land of Cambodia, there was famine and disease. Volunteer doctors from abroad flew into Phnompenh to help.

DR. JOSEPH MURPHY, March 1975: *It's worse than I expected. The conditions that I've seen have been pretty bad. I've been helping with the malnourished infants. I also assisted on some surgery last night. We did an amputation on one of the soldiers, amputated his arm. The soldier's ten-month-old daughter also had her left arm amputated. As you know, the families follow the soldier/father into the battles and live near them.*

NARRATOR: Lon Nol was encouraged to leave the country on April 1, by American diplomats who thought negotiations might be possible with Prince Sihanouk. The Khmer Rouge, poised for victory, was not about to bargain. They broadcast lists of traitors to be executed after they won.

On April 12, Operation Eagle Pull began. Helicopters evacuated the remaining Americans from Phnompenh to a naval task force in the Gulf of Thailand. Most Cambodian government ministers declined to leave. One who stayed -- and died -- wrote to the American ambassador: "You have refused us your protection, and there is nothing we can do. I hope that you and your country find happiness under Heaven."

CHHANG SON: We try so hard to please the Americans, but I now looking back to that time, think we should not have done that much, because the withdrawal of the American was decided upon without taking into consideration all the Cambodian affairs, without taking into consideration even of the Amer-, of Cambodian lives...

NARRATOR: An air of death hung over Phnompenh. Less than one week later, the Khmer Rouge overran Phnompenh airport.

PENG THUON: The people were fleeing, running across the fields in front of the airport. The planes came and thought that they were Khmer Rouge and bombed them. The bodies were all mixed up. Some soldiers, some ordinary people, some Khmer Rouge. The survivors jumped over the corpses. Then there was shelling and everything was aflame. It was already dusk and people could hardly recognize each other. When everyone was gone, the Khmer Rouge came in. The next morning they went on to Phnompenh.

NARRATOR: The Khmer Rouge soldiers had captured Phnompenh. They broadcast appeals to politicians and officers to cooperate. Those who showed up were taken away and executed.

FRANCOIS PONCHAUD: The Khmer Rouge fired a few shots and shouted, "Leave! Leave quickly! The Americans are going to bomb the city." And having experienced bombing, the people of Phnompenh had reasons to be afraid. It was terrifying, the B-52 bombing; you could see the sky redden at the horizon, then feel the air burst, then hear the explosion. So you can understand why the population in my neighborhood left even though the Khmer Rouge committed no violence. Everyone took his belongings and left.

NARRATOR: There were no American plans to bomb Phnompenh. Within two days, its population was driven into the countryside. The war had ended. Starvation and slaughter lay ahead.

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